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ABSTRACT

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) took place in Rio de Janeiro in June, 1992. The main results of UNCED were the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, Convention on Biological Diversity, Framework Convention on Climate Change, and Statement of Forest Principles. Agenda 21 is the international program of action for global sustainable development into the 21st century. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is involved in many aspects of UNCED follow-up, with particular emphasis on Agenda 21 and the conventions on biological diversity and climate change. This brief document describes in outline format, UNESCO follow-up activities to UNCED in the following areas: (1) education, public awareness and training (chapter 36 and 25 of Agenda 21); (2) capacity-building in developing countries and transfer of environmentally sound technology; (3) science; (4) oceans, coastal areas and small islands; (5) biological diversity; (6) freshwater resources; (7) land ecosystems and resources; (8) convention on biological diversity; and (9) framework convention on climate change. The UNESCO objectives and partnerships concerned with the environment and development are briefly summarized. (LZ)

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ED 385 427

UNESCO: AGENDA 21

AND UNCED FOLLOW-UP

UNCED RESULTS

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) took place in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. The main results of UNCED were the:

- ▲ Rio Declaration
- ▲ Agenda 21
- ▲ Convention on Biological Diversity
- ▲ Framework Convention on Climate Change
- ▲ Statement of Forest Principles

UNESCO'S IMPORTANT ROLE

Although successful follow-up to UNCED depends first and foremost on national action, international cooperation is essential to support and supplement national efforts. Because of its broad mandate and long experience, UNESCO is involved in many aspects of UNCED follow-up, with particular emphasis on Agenda 21 and the conventions on biological diversity and climate change. All of the programme sectors of UNESCO are involved in UNCED follow-up.

Most of UNESCO's existing programmes already support UNCED objectives. Environment and development problems have been a major focus of UNESCO's work for the past 40 years. Beginning with the Arid Zone Programme in 1951, numerous UNESCO programmes have been launched to address research, education, training and policy needs related to specific environment and development issues (e.g. water resources management, conservation of biological diversity) and ecological systems (e.g. islands, tropical forests, mountains and arid lands).

Since the Rio Conference, UNESCO has given "priority importance to...activities concerned with the implementation of the relevant chapters of Agenda 21 and of other UNCED results...both in the present biennium and in planning programmes for 1994-1995 and beyond....." (Executive Board, 141st Session, Decision 7.2.1). UNESCO is addressing UNCED follow-up primarily by reorienting existing programmes.

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UNESCO AND AGENDA 21

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS

CHAPTER 1. Preamble

2. International cooperation to accelerate sustainable development in developing countries... (international trade issues)

▶ 3. COMBATING POVERTY

4. Changing consumption patterns

▶ 5. DEMOGRAPHIC DYNAMICS AND SUSTAINABILITY

6. Protecting and promoting human health

7. Sustainable human settlement development

8. Integrating environment and development in decision-making

CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPMENT

9. Protection of the atmosphere

▶ 10. INTEGRATED... PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF LAND RESOURCES

▶ 11. COMBATING DEFORESTATION

▶ 12. COMBATING DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT

▶ 13. SUSTAINABLE MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT

14. Promoting sustainable agriculture...

▶ 15. CONSERVATION OF BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

16. Environmentally sound management of biotechnology

▶ 17. OCEANS... COASTAL AREAS AND ...SMALL ISLANDS

▶ 18. PROTECTION OF THE QUALITY AND SUPPLY OF FRESHWATER RESOURCES...

19. Environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals...

20. Environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes...

21. Environmentally sound management of solid wastes and sewage-related issues

22. Safe and environmentally sound management of radioactive wastes

STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF MAJOR GROUPS

23. Preamble

▶ 24. WOMEN...

▶ 25. CHILDREN AND YOUTH...

26. Indigenous people...

27. Non-governmental organizations...

28. Local authorities' initiatives...

29. Workers and their trade unions

30. Business and industry

▶ 31. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNITY

32. Farmers

MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

33. Financial resources and mechanisms

▶ 34. TRANSFER OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND TECHNOLOGY...

▶ 35* SCIENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

▶ 36* PROMOTING EDUCATION, PUBLIC AWARENESS AND TRAINING

▶ 37. CAPACITY-BUILDING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

38. International institutional arrangements

39. International legal instruments and mechanisms

40. Information for decision-making

NOTE: Due to its broad, cross-cutting mandate, UNESCO contributes to a greater or lesser extent to almost **ALL** of the 40 chapters of Agenda 21.

▶ AREA WHERE UNESCO HAS PARTICULARLY SUBSTANTIAL PROGRAMMES AND THUS PLAYS A PROMINENT ROLE AMONG UN AGENCIES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHAPTER

*UNESCO serves as "task manager" within the UN system for implementation of the chapter.

AGENDA 21

Agenda 21 – adopted at UNCED by 178 Governments – is the international programme of action for global sustainable development into the 21st century. It reflects a new political commitment to sustainable development at the highest level.

Agenda 21 is a complex document. Each chapter, broken into one or more programme areas, contains a wide range of activities to be undertaken by governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and/or the private sector. Science, education and capacity-building activities are listed not only in the "cross-cutting" chapters, but also in the "topical" chapters, such as those concerning biological diversity and oceans.

A high-level Commission on Sustainable Development, consisting of representatives of 53 elected countries, has been established by the UN General Assembly under the Economic and Social Council to monitor progress in Agenda 21 implementation. The Commission will review all 40 chapters of Agenda 21 by 1997, when a report on the whole of Agenda 21 implementation will be submitted to the General Assembly. UNESCO, like the other UN agencies, will need to report to the Commission on what it has done to implement the parts of Agenda 21 relevant to its competence.

PRIORITIES FOR UNESCO

In contributing to the implementation of Agenda 21, UNESCO's primary goal is to combat poverty, create equitable social and economic conditions, address issues related to population dynamics and ensure a healthy environment and sustainable use of resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

In addressing these overriding concerns, priority will be given to seven areas where UNESCO is expected to be among the UN agencies making the most substantial contribution:

- ▲ Education, public awareness and training (chs. 36 and 25)
- ▲ Science (chs. 35 and 31)
- ▲ Capacity-building in developing countries and transfer of environmentally sound technology (chs. 37 and 34)
- ▲ Oceans, coastal areas and small islands (ch. 17)
- ▲ Biological diversity (ch. 15)
- ▲ Freshwater resources (ch. 18)
- ▲ Land ecosystems and resources, including combating desertification (chs. 10, 11, 12, 13)

Of particular importance are Chapters 35 (science) and 36 (education, public awareness and training), for which UNESCO will play a lead role as "task manager" for facilitating coordination within the UN system.

UNESCO also contributes, to a greater or lesser extent, to the implementation of almost all other Agenda 21 chapters, such as those on the atmosphere, hazardous waste management, and biotechnology, as well as those dealing with the social and economic dimensions of environment and development issues, such as human health and human settlements.

This document provides a summary of UNESCO action for each of these seven priority areas.

UNESCO ACTION

EDUCATION, PUBLIC AWARENESS AND TRAINING

(CHAPTERS 36 AND 25)

- Enhance both formal and non-formal education programmes on environment and sustainable development at all levels and for people of all ages (Interdisciplinary and inter-agency co-operation project: "Environment and population education and information for human development", including the International Environmental Education Programme – UNESCO-UNEP).
- Promote basic education in general (Education for All) and scientific and technological literacy in particular (Project 2000+).
- Promote reform of national education systems (International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century).
- Foster centres of excellence and inter-university networks (UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN programmes).
- Increase training opportunities at the university level for educators, scientists and other relevant professionals in developing countries.
- Improve the communication of policy-relevant information to decision-makers.
- Raise public awareness of sustainable development issues by launching cooperative activities with the media and the private sector.

CAPACITY-BUILDING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND TRANSFER OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND TECHNOLOGY

(CHAPTERS 37 AND 34)

- Reinforce endogenous capacity-building in developing countries as a priority component of all UNESCO programmes.
- Promote South-South and North-South cooperation in relation to capacity-building, including through the UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN programmes.
- Promote the use of modern technologies in data collection and processing, research and education (e.g. geographic information system technologies).
- Adapt disciplinary, sectoral research and training as well as institutional organization to complex environment and development issues.
- Promote the development and use of renewable sources of energy, in particular solar energy.
- Foster environmentally sound construction through the development of post-graduate learning materials for engineers.

UNESCO ACTION

SCIENCE

(CHAPTERS 35 AND 31)

- Strengthen the scientific and technological basis for sustainable development through internationally coordinated research programmes, as well as observation systems and scientific assessments in the natural, engineering, and social and human sciences (list of UNESCO programme areas provided on page 11).
- Promote the development of interdisciplinary sciences for sustainable development, in order to improve the relevance and applicability of scientific knowledge to policy-making.
- Build up scientific capacity, especially in the developing countries, through university-level training programmes and cooperative networks among natural and social scientists, as well as through targeted training activities and support for scientific and training institutions.
- Improve communication and cooperation between the scientific and technological community, on the one hand, and decision-makers and the public, on the other.
- Ensure scientific input to intergovernmental negotiating processes, such as the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to elaborate a Convention to Combat Desertification.
- Integrate ethical considerations related to environment and sustainable development into the work of scientists, engineers, educators, and other professional groups, including within university curricula and in-service training (e.g. environmental code of conduct for engineers).

OCEANS, COASTAL AREAS AND SMALL ISLANDS

(CHAPTER 17)

- ▲ Promote systematic global observation in order to assess the health of the ocean, marine life and the coastal environment; improve climate models; and improve weather predictions by implementing a Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) (IOC in cooperation with WMO and ICSU).
- ▲ Address critical uncertainties for the management of the marine environment and climate change, by co-sponsoring the World Climate Research Programme (IOC with WMO and ICSU) and contributing to the ICSU International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme.
- ▲ Coordinate regional networks for coastal research, data exchange and the monitoring of harmful algal blooms; and promote coastal zone planning, including the development of methods for assessing marine pollution and other human impacts on coastal ecosystems (IOC/MRI, MAB and IHP).
- ▲ Develop national marine scientific capacities needed for research and observation programmes.
- ▲ Address the particular needs of small islands through research on coastal resources, marine pollution, coastal erosion and other small island concerns (IOC), projects on water management in tropical islands (IHP), and studies on island ecosystems (MAB).
- ▲ Assist small island developing states to take actions towards sustainable development in other areas of UNESCO's competence (education, social sciences, culture and communication).

BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

(CHAPTER 15)

- ▲ Reinforce the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Network aimed at conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of biological resources and related research, monitoring, education and training (MAB).
- ▲ Enhance world-wide coordinated research on, and inventories and monitoring of, biological diversity (Diversitas Programme – IUBS-SCOPE-UNESCO).
- ▲ Reinforce the UNESCO Network of Microbial Resources Centres (MIRCENs), and networks of marine research sites.
- ▲ Promote the conservation and equitable use of plant genetic resources by supporting and training local ethnobotanists, and preparing guidelines on plant collection (People and Plants Programme – WWF International-MAB-Kew Gardens).
- ▲ Train specialists, strengthen institutions and communicate sound scientific information on biodiversity (including through environmental education).
- ▲ Provide technical support to the Interim Secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity.

FRESHWATER RESOURCES

(CHAPTER 18)

- Support the assessment of national water resources and the establishment of water management guidelines, taking into account the impact of human activities on the hydrological cycle (IHP).
- Coordinate research to improve the understanding of processes within the hydrological component of the climate system and the impacts of possible climate change on water resources (IHP).
- Study the impacts of social transformations (e.g. population growth and urbanization) on water quality and quantity (IHP).
- Support hydrological observation programmes within the Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS).
- Promote participation by developing countries in research and observation programmes related to the hydrological cycle by strengthening technical support, post-graduate training for specialists and a lectureship scheme (IHP).
- Strengthen information for decision-makers, education and public awareness programmes about freshwater issues.

LAND ECOSYSTEMS AND RESOURCES

(CHAPTERS 10, 11, 12, 13)

- Provide the scientific basis for the conservation and management of land ecosystems and resources, and for combating desertification and deforestation (MAB).
- Promote integrated ecological approaches to the planning and management of land resources, and to combating desertification and deforestation (MAB and social sciences programmes).
- Develop and coordinate interdisciplinary research on sustainable mountain development (MAB, IHP).
- Assist in the development of national scientific capacities needed for land-use planning and resource management, including the strengthening of institutional capacities (MAB).
- Provide technical support to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to elaborate a Convention on Desertification, particularly in Africa (MAB, IHP).
- Strengthen information for decision-makers, education, and public awareness programmes on land ecosystems and resources, particularly in relation to desertification and deforestation.
- Support the development of a Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS), a joint programme of UNEP, FAO, UNESCO, WMO and ICSU.

Convention on Biological Diversity

The Convention on Biological Diversity was signed at UNCED by 157 countries. This Convention provides, for the first time, an internationally agreed upon legal framework for concerted action to conserve biodiversity. The International Negotiating Committee has requested UNESCO and FAO to contribute to the work of an Interim Secretariat for the Convention established by UNEP.

Biodiversity is an area of priority importance for UNESCO in UNCED follow-up, not only under the Convention, but also under Chapter 15 of Agenda 21. UNESCO will support the implementation of the Convention primarily through activities to:

- Promote *in situ* conservation of biodiversity by strengthening the network of biosphere reserves, including its legal status, and associated work on ecosystem management (MAB).
- Contribute to the preparation of a research agenda under the Convention (MAB, IOC/MRI, IHP, MIRCENs).
- Participate in country studies of biological diversity and help develop guidelines for conducting these studies.
- Develop education and public awareness programmes related to biological diversity (science and education programmes).
- Strengthen developing country capacities in the ecological and biological sciences, including taxonomy and biotechnology.
- Monitor the impacts of global change on biological diversity by contributing to the Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS).

Framework Convention on Climate Change

The Framework Convention on Climate Change was signed at UNCED by 154 countries. The purpose of the Convention is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous human impacts to the climate system

UNESCO and its IOC will support the implementation of the Convention primarily through the following activities:

- Co-sponsor the World Climate Programme (WMO, UNEP, UNESCO and its IOC, FAO and ICSU).
- Promote systematic observations of the ocean that can be used to improve climate models and monitor the impacts of climate change, by implementing a Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) (IOC in cooperation with WMO and ICSU).
- Promote systematic observation of terrestrial ecosystems and processes by contributing to the Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS).
- Promote research needed to understand the role of the ocean as a source and sink for greenhouse gases (IOC).
- Promote research on the role of the hydrological cycle in the climate system and the impacts of climate change on water resources (IHP).
- Strengthen training, education, public awareness programmes and information for decision-makers about climate change.

ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT AT UNESCO

OBJECTIVES

UNESCO's role in the field of environment and development is to:

- Improve understanding of the natural and human environment and of complex environment and development issues.
- Contribute to problem-solving by providing policy-relevant information to decision-makers.
- Increase scientific and technical expertise.
- Foster institutional development and change.
- Provide the public with the knowledge and skills needed for sustainable development through both formal education programmes and public awareness activities.
- Promote international cooperation and exchange with emphasis on addressing the needs of developing countries.

PARTNERS

Implementation of Agenda 21 marks the beginning of a new era of cooperation and coordination within the UN system, of strengthening established partnerships and developing new ones.

UNESCO works closely with other UN agencies, particularly UNEP, WMO and FAO, as well as with the major international scientific and professional associations in the field of environment and development, notably ICSU and its member unions and committees, and the World Conservation Union (IUCN). Efforts are now being made to enhance cooperation within the UN system, including with financing institutions and mechanisms (such as the Global Environment Facility), as recommended in Chapter 38 of Agenda 21.

In order to contribute more effectively to UNCED follow-up, UNESCO is actively seeking opportunities for new partnership arrangements, including arrangements with foundations, bilateral donors and the private sector. UNESCO is also more interested than ever in involving the broad NGO community in its work.

UNESCO Action

UNESCO's activities to follow up UNCED cut across all of its areas of competence (education, natural and social sciences, culture and communication).

- MAN AND THE BIOSPHERE (MAB) PROGRAMME
  including the
  - International Biosphere Reserve Network
  - Diversitas Programme (IUBS-SCOPE-UNESCO)
  - Tropical Soil Biology and Fertility Programme (IUBS-UNESCO)
- INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION (IOC)
  and programmes on marine science related issues (MRI)
- INTERNATIONAL HYDROLOGICAL PROGRAMME (IHP)
  including the Humid Tropics Hydrology Programme
- EARTH SCIENCES AND NATURAL HAZARDS PROGRAMMES
  including the International Geological Correlation Programme (UNESCO-IUGS)
- NETWORK OF MICROBIAL RESOURCES CENTRES (MIRCENS)
- PROGRAMMES IN BASIC AND ENGINEERING SCIENCES
- SOCIAL SCIENCES PROGRAMMES
  including programmes on demographic dynamics, human settlements and sustainable development
- INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME (UNESCO-UNEP)
  within the Interdisciplinary and inter-agency co-operation project: "Environment and population education and information for human development"
- EDUCATION FOR ALL (EFA)
- SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL LITERACY FOR ALL - PROJECT 2000+
- UNESCO CHAIRS AND UNITWIN PROGRAMMES
- CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE
- WORLD DECADE FOR CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
- COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION PROGRAMMES

In the follow-up to UNCED, UNESCO will take into account fully the needs of the least developed countries, the "Priority Africa" programme, and the recently established UNESCO Programme for Central and Eastern European Development (PROCEED).

The Interdisciplinary Challenge

The diversity of UNESCO's programmes in environment and sustainable development is a great asset for the Organization. UNCED follow-up provides an important opportunity to promote interdisciplinary and intersectoral approaches and activities. It is UNESCO's programmes which will spearhead this new direction. At the same time, the Bureau for the Coordination of Environmental Programmes will ensure a coherent overall policy and foster inter-programme and inter-agency cooperation.

Four intersectoral initiatives have been launched to chart new directions across established programme lines. A committee of outside experts has been appointed by the Director-General to stimulate these initiatives.

"Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature."

Principle 1, *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*, June 1992

Further Information

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